

INITIATION RITES

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of eight boys, ranging in age approximately between nine and eleven. Six of the boys were of the Hawk moiety and two of the Eagle. They all came from that section of Lesu known as Tagam, formerly another village separate from Lesu.¹ 881

PREPARATIONS

The initial preparations are begun about ten months in advance, when the garden magician makes taro magic, and the rain magician rain magic, in order to ensure a good crop. At this same time arrangements are made for the purchase of the pigs for the future feast. The men who will display *malanggans* are also busy superintending their carving. These and the dancing-masks are begun four or five months before the rites are held,² and the work is done in a secluded place, away from all observation. [789]

The first communal work occurs about a month before the boys are circumcised, and consists of the building of the enclosure in which they will later be secluded. All the men and boys of Lesu and some from the neighbouring villages of Ambwa and Laganian assist in this work. The men from Ambwa reach the hamlet of Penguli (in Lesu) early in the morning, where they are joined by the Lesu men. They are all in a gay mood. With the *kerapo* leaves³ stuck in their hair and in their belts, about fifty of them go to a clearing a short distance from the hamlet of Penguli. Here they cut down the bamboo trees and then crack the trunks at the circular rings with their knives,⁴ working with enthusiasm and zest. Then, placing the bamboo trunks on their shoulders, they walk down to the beach and along it [824] [412]

¹ See Chapter I, p. 32.

² Making of the *malanggans* described, pp. 211, 212.

³ The *kerapo* leaf is used decoratively on all ritual occasions.

⁴ Knives have been recently introduced. Men who have been away to work on plantations have them, and they were the most popular gift which I could make. [177]

- 286 net is held taut on a stick stuck into the ground, the other is fastened on a small twig, which is used as a needle. If a man who does not know how to weave a net wants one, he will collect the vine from the bush and take it to any of the weaving experts, who makes it for one *tsera*. There are eight men in the village who are experts in weaving.

CARVING, WORK IN TORTOISE-SHELL, ETC.

- 322 The only carved objects are *malanggans* and masks, which are made by specialists who are paid for their work. In the village of Lesu there is just one man who is skilled in this work, and in several other villages there is only one carver. When a *malanggan* is to be made, the man who owns it instructs the carver how it is to be made, and will spend much time with him while the wood is being carved. The work to-day is done with knives purchased at trade stores. In the past sharp stones were used, and the natives say that the carving is better since it has been done with knives. It is taboo for anyone except the man who owns the *malanggan* to watch the carver at work. The latter enjoys no special prestige because of his skill. In Lesu the carver, Kanua, is a nonentity in village life aside from the work of carving. In Medina, on the other hand, the carver, who is an old man, enjoys much prestige, but he is a man of real knowledge of *malanggans* and folk-tales and an important man in his clan.
- [5412] [554] Tortoise-shell work is also confined to a few, and is done with a knife, where formerly it was done with a stone. The only objects made are the decoration for the *kepkep* and the *polok* for scooping out coconut. The latter are not made very frequently now.
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- 396 The building of canoes is almost a lost art on this part of the island. No new ones were made while I was there, and the few in existence were small dugout canoes with an outrigger, but with no carving. They were more like children's canoes. The road which runs south from Kavieng a hundred
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